

The Teacher Gets Detention

A steamy murder trial bewitches a small town

The infamous post-Persian Gulf War news depression has not yet hit Exeter, N.H. As soon as Saddam surrendered, many citizens of that town switched channels from CNN to local news shows covering the trial of Pamela Smart. Not that the national press didn't have an inquiring mind about the case, in which a pretty, petite 23-year-old high-school teacher was accused of urging her 16-year-old lover to kill her husband. "Entertainment Tonight" set up a satellite dish in the parking lot of the drab Rockingham County Superior Courthouse. There was just something terribly New England about an accused woman who had called herself "The Maiden of Metal" during her college radio days. Local folks were so riveted by the unfolding drama—with its digressions into back-seat car sex, impromptu strip acts, plus other things New Hampshirites are prone to think about at the end of a long winter anyway—that they began lining up for seats at 2 a.m. "This fills in where Desert Storm left off," said Leila Meyer, owner of the Lace & Lilacs tearoom. Oddly, one of the few people who didn't seem excited—even as she heard herself pronounced guilty of conspiracy to commit murder and two other charges last Friday—was Pamela Smart.

Ice cube: This was an instance of a young media coordinator, three years out of Florida State University, behaving like an old media pro. Throughout the 13-day trial, Smart parried every pointed question with the aplomb of Barbara Walters, the journalist whom she had told friends she most admired. Her style on the stand was a model of Yankee straightforwardness, even as she spoke of wearing a blue negligee, giving her lover, who was then 15, pointers on how to prepare a high-school video project and showing him the steamy cassette of "9½ Weeks." After watching that film, William Flynn said, he and Smart re-enacted certain scenes, including one in which Mickey Rourke slowly rubs an ice cube over Kim Basinger's nude body. After hearing that testimony, the people of Exeter began lining up even earlier. Judge Douglas Gray at one point believed that public interest in the proceedings was getting excessive. "We cannot hear the record because of the constant clicking of your shutters," he angrily told photographers. "I don't know how



LISA BUL—AP

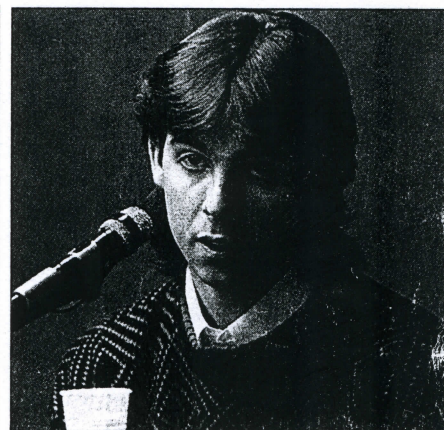
many pictures you need of one individual."

The prosecution seemed to be painting two pictures of Smart, both unflattering. Assistant Attorney General Paul Maggioto portrayed her as a "programmed robot" and a "cool, calculating operator" who had earned a nearly perfect grade index in school and planned to use her "ability to answer questions to pull one over" on the jury. At the same time, he said that her motive for murder, once she got "her hooks so deep into [Flynn's] hormones," was an overwhelming urge to keep her affair a secret, even if it meant eliminating her husband. Simply divorcing him would have revealed the affair and ruined her reputation in the small town. Ultimately, it was Flynn and his friends—now facing minimum prison terms of 28 and 18 years after pleading guilty to lesser charges in exchange for their testimony—who told the world about a very unrobotic-sounding Smart. His former teacher, Flynn testified, once performed a striptease to Van Halen's "Black and Blue" and had sex with him in her car "four to seven times" in one afternoon. One witness testified that Smart instructed Flynn not to shoot her husband in front of their dog, lest little Halen, as he is called, be permanently traumatized.

Smart admitted to some less than exemplary behavior on the stand, but so matter-of-factly that she may have minimized its impact on the jury. "I'm not the first person in America to ever have an affair," she said. Ultimately, the effect of Flynn breaking down in tears as he described pulling the trigger on a kneeling, pleading Greg Smart may have been too much for her lawyers to overcome. Her case was also hurt by the testimony of another former student, Cece-



'Maiden of Metal': Pamela Smart in Exeter on the day of the verdict (left), with Greg at their wedding in May 1989 (above), former student and ex-lover William Flynn



JIM COLE—AP

lia Pierce, who said she had walked in on Smart and Flynn the night they'd watched "9½ Weeks" and seen the accused "bopping Bill." Pierce, wearing a concealed wire provided by police, produced audiotapes of Smart saying that if Cecelia "tells the f---ing truth" she would "send me to the f---ing slammer for the rest of our entire life."

Smart's attorney said in response that his client was at that time a "stressed basket case," taking the antidepressant drug Prozac while under the care of a psychiatrist, and was acting in an irrational manner. The jury was apparently unimpressed by that explanation; it took 13 hours to find her guilty. Smart, who didn't flinch when the verdict was read, got an automatic sentence of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. Pierce, 16, got a \$100,000 option for the screen rights to her story.

Folder: Smart, Pamela

Source: ?

Item:

Date: 4/11/1991